

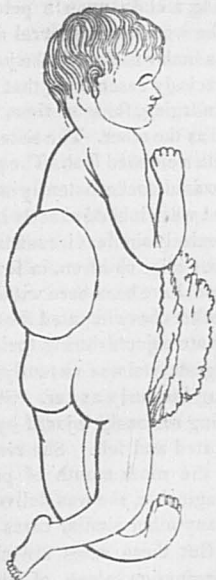
ART. VI. *Case of Monstrosity, with some Remarks upon Moles, Marks, &c.* By STEPHEN W. WILLIAMS, M. D., Late Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the Berkshire Medical Institution.

ON the 5th of February, 1834, I delivered Mrs. L. H. of a deformed child, at about the seventh month of gestation. She was upwards of forty years of age; and had heretofore borne six healthy children. For several years she had been troubled with severe menorrhagic affections, and much of the time with leucorrhœa, which affected her nervous system very much. She has, likewise, been troubled with dyspepsia, and general numbness. Early in the month of the previous September, not feeling very well, she left her house, to visit one of the neighbour's about ten rods off, which was the last circumstance she recollected, till she found herself in her bed in her own house. After leaving home, she wandered into an orchard, twelve or fifteen rods distant, where she fell. How long she remained on the ground cannot be ascertained. She was found by her husband and son in a state of insensibility, and conveyed into the house. I was immediately sent for, and found her recovering her sensibility, and wondering how she came where she was. She was very pale, faint, and numb; complained of slight pain in her head and back; was very cold; and her pulse scarcely perceptible. I directed stimulants and frictions to produce reaction, and warmth. It was several hours before her pulse rose sufficiently to bear blood-letting, and when I resorted to that measure, it was with some hesitation and doubt. She bore but a small bleeding before she became faint, and we were under the necessity of conveying her to bed. She continued languid and numb several days, when she was restored to a tolerable comfortable state of health. At the time I bled her, she told me that her menstrual discharges had been suppressed about two months. I gave it as my opinion, that she was in a state of pregnancy, at which she was much surprised. For several of the last weeks previous to her delivery, she was very unwell, complaining of numbness, heartburn, and sickness at the stomach; not, however, to so great a degree as to ask medical advice. For a few weeks past she felt feeble, and rather indistinct motions of the fœtus, much lower in the uterus than usual, and she complained of great weight in the womb.

On the morning of the 5th of February, she was attacked with labour pains, which continued through the day, but she had no idea that she was going to be confined. She sent for me in the evening, hoping that I should be able to do something to arrest her pains. I

immediately perceived that she was in labour, and sent for assistants, and very soon delivered her. The presentation was of the right ear, but I soon regulated it, and brought the child into the world in the natural way. The head and body of the child was not enveloped in its usual membranes and water. The following description, with the plate, will give a correct idea of the production.

The head, neck, arms, and thorax were natural, except that the right side of the thorax was larger than the left. This part of the body was covered with patches of dry mould. The head were covered with long black hair. All of her children had remarkably long hair at the time of birth. From the thorax, the appearance was that of a complete monstrosity. The anterior parietes of the abdomen were deficient, and the unorganized bowels were protruded in a confused mass, somewhat resembling the placenta. The liver was large and natural, and partially protruded from the abdomen. I discovered but one kidney, which was large and out of place. At the lower part of the abdomen there was a large sac, filled with yellowish coloured water. On the back, which was covered with true skin, directly over the lumbar vertebrae, was a large encysted tumour, which contained in a thin sac, more than half a pint of thin yellowish water, constituting a genuine spina bifida, the opening into which from the spine, was large enough to admit the blunt end of a probe. The bones of the spine were as solid as those of any foetus at that age. The spine itself was somewhat incurvated. The anus was imperforate. No indications whereby we might be able to distinguish the sex, were apparent. Two wart-like excrescences were seen where the scrotum or labii pudendi should be, but nothing definite could be determined from them. The legs were shrivelled, and feet remarkably clubbed. The child gasped two or three times after delivery.



The investigation of the subject of monsters leads to a physiological question, which is as yet unsettled, viz. does the imagination of the mother affect the foetus in utero? The doctrine of *Nævi Materni*, or marks from the imagination of the mother, was universally believed,

from the most ancient times almost to the present. In fact, many, very many practitioners, of the present day, believe it as firmly as they believe any medical fact.

Although cases like the following are frequently occurring in the practice of physicians, yet I will relate a few which I have noticed in my practice, and then make a few passing remarks upon them. A woman, in the sixth month of pregnancy, in reaching from a chair to hang a cloth upon a pole over head, fell, and lacerated her knee. The wound was several days in healing. When her child was born, the limb was flexed, the joint was stiff, and there was a scar on the knee precisely resembling that on the mother's. By constant friction and bandaging, for some time, the limb became flexible, and it is now as useful as the other. The sister of a woman in pregnancy had a young child with a clubbed foot. The pregnant sister frequently saw this child, and it was almost constantly in her mind. When her own child was born the foot was clubbed exactly in the same manner. Two other cases, under precisely similar circumstances, have recently occurred in my practice. Four idiot children, in four different families, in our little neighbourhood, have been born within a few years, and in each of these cases the mothers have imputed the misfortune to frights from seeing these unfortunate objects during their pregnancy.* A woman in the sixth month of gestation was violently frightened by a cow with a young calf, running furiously at her. She had scarcely time to save herself from being seriously injured by running into a house. She immediately fainted and fell. She remained very unwell till the commencement of the ninth month of pregnancy, when, with the utmost difficulty imaginable, she was delivered of a monster. Fortunately it was dead. Many other similar cases have occurred to my observation.

But these cases are entirely different from those in which the imagination alone of the mother, in what are called longings, produce. My opinion is, that in no possible instance can the *longings* of the mother, for any particular article or thing, let her have ever so much a desire for it, and not be gratified in it, can have any effect towards marking the child. Nothing is more common than the belief that the longings of a pregnant woman must be gratified, and if they are not gratified, the child will bear some marks or resemblances upon its body of the thing longed for. Most modern writers agree, that the *fœtus* in utero cannot be marked by any

* Our correspondent cannot certainly consider the *opinion* of the mothers, in these cases, as evidence of the slightest weight, or as in any degree tending to settle the question in dispute.—EDITOR.

depraved appetite of the mother. I have seen many *nævi materni*, but I must confess I have never seen a case which bore the least resemblance to the thing said to have been longed for. A mark is found upon a child at birth, or sometime after. The woman then recollects that she longed for something, and brings herself and nurses to believe that the mark upon the child exactly resembles the thing she wished for. Cherries, plums, strawberries, and other fruit, are the articles generally longed for, and the marks are most frequently of the colour, and about the size of these kind of fruit. Sometimes the marks are much larger than these fruits, the woman then longed for something else.

In relation to this subject, I communicated the case of a monster from the fright occasioned by the cow, to the late Dr. RUSH, of Philadelphia, and asked his opinion in regard to marks. He replied, that he had no doubt that the fright might have produced the change in the child which was noticed, and that serious frights might produce many of those appearances in infants which have been mentioned by writers on the subject. But in relation to longings he mentioned the fact, that the late Dr. M'AULEY, of London, used to make it a practice to ask all the women whom he delivered, before they saw their children, whether, during pregnancy, they had ever longed for any thing, and if they had, what it was they longed for. In above three thousand instances he never saw the least resemblance between the mark and the thing longed for. These facts are sufficient to set at rest all doubts upon the subject.

Deerfield, Mass. January 1st, 1835.

ART. VII. *A Case of Fractured Spine, with Depression of the Spinous Process, and the Operation for its Removal.* By DAVID L. ROGERS, M. D. of New York city. (Communicated by S. R. KIRBY, M. D.)

THIS case occurred on the 3d of February, 1834, in the person of a Mr. Little, aged thirty-one years, who fell from the roof of a three story house, (as is supposed,) upon a coal box, which fractured the spinous process of the first lumbar vertebræ, and depressed this process upon the spinal cord; a space was distinctly felt between the last dorsal and second lumbar vertebra. He presented those symptoms, paralysis and suffering, which are familiar to surgeons in such cases.